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ABSTRACT

This paper presents three case studies of collaborations with student teachers in a college course on the Psychology of Teaching in which they reflected after class on class events. The paper traces the development of the reflective laboratories through the three cases, which illustrate the process and content of collaborative reflection. The course was primarily for students enrolled in two teacher education programs for the Master of Arts in Teaching and Master of Science in Teaching. Class discussions focused on required readings, on the students' own narratives of their practice teaching experiences, and on connections between texts and experiences. After looking at the case studies, the paper presents four comments from the professor's experience. The comments examine: the professor's reflections on his beliefs; the professor's re-reading of his case narratives; the professor's reflection on those reflections; and disciplined reflection on practice. (Contains 10 references.) (SM)

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# Reflecting With Students On My Daily Teaching: Three Case Studies of a Post-Class Laboratory

Frederick F. Lighthall -- 4/9/2000

This paper presents three case studies of collaborations with students in my course on the Psychology of Teaching [1] in which we reflect after class on class events. Immediately after almost every class session of the course's twenty meetings, students and I reviewed and explored the events of the just preceding class. Class discussions themselves frequently focused on narratives of teaching from the student teachers currently in the course and from students in previous years who wrote teaching narratives. I trace the development of the reflective laboratories through three cases that illustrate the process and contents of collaborative reflection. After the cases I draw out personal learnings and contributions the paper makes to advances in reflective practice.

The year before the events in the first case, I started holding post-session review discussions with an undergraduate student, David Maier. I had created a new role for him as part of an agreement to give him permission to take the course. David, an active participant in another course I had taught, asked special permission to enroll in this class. While the course was designed and reserved for Masters students preparing to become teachers, and was taken by those students simultaneously with their practice teaching, David was not teaching and would not be able to write the papers which dealt with each student's teaching. Instead, I agreed that David could be something of a special assistant to me. He would do all the work required of the other students, but he would also do two other things. He would manage the details of recording each session and he and I would review with me after each class session the events of that session. I felt that such a regular meeting with another person would ensure a regularity and intensity of reflection that was not possible for me alone. [2]

**Background**

The course was primarily for students enrolled in two teacher education programs, for the Master of Arts in Teaching (secondary schools) and the Master of Science in Teaching (elementary schools). The students came to my Tuesday and Thursday classes after their day of practice teaching, which was their only other program responsibility that quarter.

Two or three readings were required for each class session. Discussion focused on the texts, on the students' own narratives of their practice teaching experiences, and on connections between texts and experiences. Discussions were prepared: students wrote a one- or two-page

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structured exercise (a "QACP" [3] ) on the assigned readings for one of the two sessions each week . (They split about evenly between Tuesday and Thursday for writing the QACP) These papers ensured that class discussions were prepared by some thoughtful reading, session by session. So much for background. Following are three case studies of my teaching and of assisted reflection on my teaching.

## Case I: Reflective Assistance in Managing A Student-Instructor Conflict

This case describes post-class review discussions the year after my discussions with David Maier. David and I had recorded both our class sessions and our review sessions that previous year, and recording continued this second year. This second year I had admitted into the course three students who were currently not teaching to reflect with me on my teaching. The case describes how they helped me gain perspective essential in managing a conflict that arose in a class session between me and a student, "Donna." Course enrollment this second year, the year of my conflict with Donna, was sixteen or seventeen Master of Arts in Teaching and Master of Science in Teaching students, and two doctoral students. [4]

### My Self-Study Assistants

I felt lucky in having these three students to reflect with. Maria had been an elementary school principal and had returned for the doctorate. Amy had studied religious instruction in Holland and in a South American country and was pursuing a doctorate in teacher education. Bob had taught English in a private school, had already taken a teaching program as an undergraduate, and was enrolled in the MAT program. None of the three would be doing teaching that quarter, and each was interested in my project of post-class reviews. They would sit with me after each class and talk about what had happened in the class. Bob had agreed to take care of recording the teaching sessions and our post-class discussions. The implicit "agenda" for these post-class reviews were two questions: How did it go? and What happened? In the present instance, I had a particular concern, and I brought it up.

### The Conflict

The conflict arose in the second meeting of the course. For the session in question, students had read (and had written a QACP on) sections of two chapters from Vygotsky's (1978) Mind in Society -- The Development of Higher Psychological Processes, [5] and segments of

"Semiotic Mechanisms in Vygotsky's Genetic Law of Cultural Development," from Wertsch (1985).

The interchanges between Donna and me were in three segments of the second meeting of the course. [6] The first interchange was about halfway through the 90-minute session, the second about 25 minutes later, and the third was after class, as students were exiting. Each interchange was context for the next, of course, and all three were context for that class's post-class review by the three students who assisted me in reflecting on my teaching.

*Interchange 1.* Several students had read aloud what they had written as preparation for class, quoting Wertsch's text, giving their versions of his meaning and his arguments. We had come to a place where some students expressed surprise that Wertsch went right by evidence in a narrative Wertsch himself had quoted, in which a mother is trying to teach her toddler to assemble puzzle pieces to match a model.

*The model is a flat puzzle of a truck. The puzzle consists of a completed model of a truck in flat puzzle form on one side of the table, and on the other side, a set of pieces of the truck all mixed up in front of the outline of the truck. The child's "task," which his mother is to help him complete, is to assemble mixed pieces within the truck outline and to reproduce the image of the truck opposite it on the table. The mixed pieces from which the model is to be duplicated include pieces for the truck's "wheels" (showing a clearly identifiable tire from side view). The child handles the wheel piece, calls it a "cracker," and puts it in his mouth. He makes repeated reference to it as "cracker."*

*I point out that Wertsch is "blind" to the narrative evidence that the child is focused on the child's own agenda, namely "cracker," that is, that the child is clearly showing signs of being hungry. I point out that Wertsch, reading the narrative through Vygotsky's perspective, is blinded by Vygotsky's theory. The theory blinds Wertsch "to the fact that, hey, there's an organism out there, that the theory doesn't have a place for."*

***Donna**: Okay, but couldn't you say that [inaudible. The tape is not clear here, but Donna is offering another interpretation of "cracker," where she is evidently making an analogy, an analogy that I do not understand].*

***Me:** Of course. The term, "Ritz Cracker," [inaudible]*

***Donna**: No, no, no. But I mean I was putting the entire education as "cracker." [inaudible] I*

*mean [inaudible] I don't know..*

***Me**: Yes, and.. What.. What are you up to? Reducing everything to one side?*

***Donna:** No, no. I'm just [inaudible]*

***Me:** Yes, sure. [inaudible] Sure. But what is not explained by culture is the impulse to eat. You don't need culture here. When the infant comes out of the womb, right quick and gets put next to momma, it suddenly starts doing things with its lips. And nobody ever told him [sic] how to do that.*

***Donna:** Oh, sure. I agree with that. I totally agree with you. But there's no immediate impulse to go chewing on things that aren't, um, considered edible. [Donna sees doubt in fellow students' faces.] Do you think?*

***Several students:** [Over-talking] Yes there is. [Much talking and some laughing.] They put everything in their mouth!*

***Me:** Wait, wait. We don't have to settle this here..[end of side one of tape; it is quickly turned] .. The other point was that there are impulses that are not in Vygotsky's theory. Okay? And other theories pick up the impulse kind of thing and take it a lot further.*

*Discussion proceeded with students' questions about the Wertsch text in connection with Vygotskian thought.*

After about an hour of class discussion, I drew a diagram on the chalkboard. It sums up in simple terms much of the discussion.

CULTURE
|
|
|
ORGANISM

We had explored two polar demands or constraints entailed in any teaching. One was the demand of culture, that learners are expected to take in, to internalize various important ways of culture -- to learn, for example, mathematics, language use, written forms, and so on. Kids have to be prepared to live in a culture already established, and to do that, they must be brought to internalize a wide range of cultural forms. That was one polarity that the class had explored in

our discussion of Vygotsky's distinction between tool and sign, and of his zone of proximal development. The other polarity in our discussion was that of "Organism," the learner.

Much of the class's discussion of the narrative between a mother and her young pre-schooler, reproduced by Wertsch (1985, p.172-173) from his own research, had focused on the pre-schooler's evident hunger, as he was being taught by his mom to complete a puzzle. While the mother made various suggestions and observations and gestures, the child, picked up a piece of the puzzle representing a tire or wheel, referred to it as a "cracker," and put it in his mouth.

Our discussion explored what the child's behavior might mean, in terms of the child's own preoccupations, in terms of the assigned Vygotskian text, and in terms of Wertsch's discussion of "the appropriate situation definition."

Exaggerating, I pointed out that Vygotsky was focused exclusively on the claims of culture, on the idea that development occurred from the outside (culture) in, and that his theory made no place for biological urges like this child's hunger. I pointed out that while Vygotsky's ideas were important and were useful for teachers, they took no account of a person's biological motivations or impulses and allowed no place for the individual learner's inner life and psychological needs as a force in its own right. Wertsch's narrative of the mother and child provided a nice example of how a thoroughly Vygotskian outlook could blind one to the inner life of a learner. The fully quoted text from Wertsch showed that even in preparing the narrative for publication it had apparently never entered Wertsch's mind to recognize the significance of the child's repeated response to the truck "wheel" as a "cracker."

*Interchange 2*. I pointed out that Vygotsky focused his attention on culture, while Freud, for example, like many Western motivational psychologists, focused his attention on the individual psyche. The educational task, I said, was to get the demands of these two, of culture and psyche, "sometimes, and frequently enough, meshed."

***Me:*** *"Education's task is, indeed, to privilege that [pointing to culture], but it can't just do it wooden-headedly. That isn't the way the organism is set up. The organism is set up to work its own adaptation at whatever level it's at. So, it has its agenda. And that's what we've been talking about. He [Vygotsky] is looking at this one [I point to culture on the diagram]. Freud looks at the other one [I point to organism on the diagram]."*

***Donna:*** *I don't know. I think that that's a Marxist.. What you pointed out is definitely a Marxist*

*view but I don't necessarily think that Vygotsky would represent a pure Marxist or pure cultural influence.*

***Me:*** *Well, fine, find me organismic impulse in Vygotsky.*

***Donna:*** *Well, for one thing, I mean he accepts much of what Piaget says. Um, he challenges it, but also he recognizes the validity of Piaget's work.*

***Me:*** *Piaget talks about impulsivity?*

***Donna:*** *You did say organism. And he's completely organism centered.*

*[At this point I saw the two of us headed into a private discussion or debate over where Piaget and Vygotsky did or did not conflict -- excluding the rest of the class and ignoring the text in front of us. I decided to cut it short and to move back to what I considered the mainstream of the text and discussion:]*

***Me:*** *Well, we're not going to enter into a debate on Piaget vs. Vygotsky.*

***Donna:*** *Okay.*

***Me:*** *The point is, Vygotsky in relation to [inaudible] ... saying Vygotsky is really very much like Piaget?*

***Donna:*** *No, no..*

***Me:*** *He considered himself opposed in view, and publicly debated Piaget.*

***Donna:*** *That's not what I'm saying. I'm not saying that he considered himself a disciple of Piaget. I'm saying that he would not completely reject organismal...*

***Me:*** *All right. If you can find me evidence of that, then please do. Because otherwise, I think it is much easier to understand Vygotsky, if you understand him as the voice of culture. And he's saying that what get's internalized is what is mind. What becomes intelligence is what the kid learns from his care givers to say to himself in certain situations and in trying to act.*

*Another student had narrated an apt teaching experience in the previous class, and I asked her to repeat her narrative, as a way of grounding our discussion of Vygotskian abstractions. This led to an extended discussion of the idea of "situation definition," a term important for Wertsch, as applied to the student's narrative, and the class ended.*

*Interchange # 3.* As the last students were filing out, Donna came up to me and complained in a sharp and derogatory tone about what she regarded as my closed-minded response to her in the class discussion. I do not remember her words or mine, but I believe I repeated my challenge to her that she find some textual evidence of Vygotsky's giving any important place to organismic or individual motivational factors in his ideas about teaching or education. I also remember being taken aback, feeling attacked and defensive, and a mixture of embarrassment and anger.

**Post-Class Review**

I remember feeling deep fatigue and discouragement as I trudged up the stairs to our post-class review. I don't know now, seven years later, whether I started the review session immediately with my concern about my interchanges with Donna, or whether I started with my usual more open, "What struck you?" or "What happened that we should talk about?" [7] I do remember that when we had finished talking about Donna's and my interchange, I felt a good deal of relief.

First, the three students gave their versions of what had happened and it was clear from their tone, demeanor, and words that they did not take my interchange with Donna as personally hostile or threatening as I had. Second, I was reminded in the course of our review that earlier in the session Donna had found herself starkly at odds with the views of her peers ( in interchange # 1, on the matter of infants' immediate post-natal sucking reflexes) and had been silent for some time afterward. Bob also filled in background from his knowledge of Donna's style of participating within the MAT group as a whole. He indicated Donna's style was to raise objections, frequently enough finding herself at odds with others.

I do not know if I asked the trio directly about the chances of Donna's continued challenges for the sake of challenge, as it seemed to me very possible. But at some point in our talking about the interchanges and about Donna's manner, I reached an emotional settlement, a calm in my own mind. It was that I could continue to teach without fearing that I would be in constant battle with Donna's debating points of each text, intent upon showing her superior understanding. Part of my feeling of being settled and non- or much less defensive with Donna came from realizing that perhaps she had been embarrassed by her early interchange with me (# 1), what with her peers' expressing so clear a contradiction of her opinion, and that she had on

that account to save some face by finding some other way to show herself not stupid, but rather knowledgeable (# 2, in discussing Vygotsky in relation to Piaget). Seeing that, I empathized with her situation, feeling more sympathy toward her than I had earlier.

As these feelings grew, I made a connection between Donna's comments about Piaget and some theory by Dweck and Leggett (1988) that later the class would read about, and I briefly alluded to them in our review discussion. Amy and Bob described it in a paper they wrote for the course:

> Lighthall shared a framework from one of our future texts on two different orientations to learning: a performance orientation and a learning orientation. A performance orientation compels one to prove that he has ability. A mistake is seen as a disclosure of an inadequate self, to be avoided at all costs, so it is difficulty to back down and admit mistakes. It is very important to be right in order to hold onto a secure sense of self. A learning orientation, on the other hand, motivates one to seek to learn... Making mistakes is not seen as a failure, but rather as the natural process by which one learns. Considering this framework helped us to better understand what had happened in this brief clash in class. [8]

The trio and I also thought together about how I might have responded less in terms of my own pedagogic and curricular agenda, more responsive to Donna's. They suggested I might have left Donna feeling less cut off if I had acknowledged the importance she evidently attributed to the issue of where Vygotsky stood as to organismic contributions to learning. This, too, made me feel that all was not lost between me and Donna.

**Donna's Surprising Request**

Sometime before the next class session, perhaps the next day, Donna knocked on my office door and asked if she could talk. I said sure, she came in, sat down, and said she had a request. She had talked it over with the director of her MAT program and he had said that I would have to be the one to decide on her request. Briefly, she wanted to drop the course and take, instead, a reading course with me. She explained that she didn't think she and I could get along in the class, and that she would prefer to do a reading course.

I was, to say the least, astounded. I was not surprised that she had negative feelings about our interchanges. But it never entered my head that she might deal with those feelings by asking to drop a class shared with some 20 other peers in favor of one where she would be in a one-to-

one relation with a "closed-minded" faculty member. Nonetheless, I was now much more settled with her, having had the earlier discussion with my trio, more settled than clearly she was with me. I remember being surprised at myself at the time at what came easily to say: I simply said no, that I thought she and I could work together. I believe we had more back and forth than that, but I cannot recall it. I do remember feeling settled, calm, and matter of fact. And firmly secure in resisting her request and not buying her conclusion that we could not work out a productive instructional relationship in the class. I believe she returned to the director of her program and pleaded with him to let her skip the course, but he was in no position to do so since it is required for certification. Be that as it may, the following Tuesday she appeared in class, and it was uneventful. In short order, Donna participated in a matter-of-fact way, wrote papers indicating increasing engagement with the course's readings, and in the end wrote a highly perceptive, self-observational study of her own practice teaching, well grounded in the texts she chose for her perspectives.

**Conclusion**

I credit the post-class discussion, immediately after my "clashing" interchange with Donna, for giving me the perspective I needed to move away from my initial negative perception of Donna -- as, to put not too fine a point on it, something between a prima donna and a smart-ass snot. Our post-class discussion shifted my ego-centrism and allowed me to see myself and Donna in a fairly normal student-faculty relationship in class. I needed, and got, emotional perspective by talking about Donna's and my butting heads, talking with the three reflective partners who a) had been direct witnesses and b) were not so emotionally involved. Not that I haven't gained more perspective from my re-listening to the tapes and from writing (and reading) this account. I now see some of my own teaching deficiencies more clearly. But had I not had the benefit of our four-way discussion with three others who had been present and who had, therefore, considerable authority in their various views, I would have been much more disposed to say yes to Donna's request for an independent study format. Such a format would have kept Donna out of the class and at a distance more typical of the independent reading course. And that would have been, as it turned out, a net loss for both her and me.

**Post-Script**

As I finished writing this case study, particularly as I wrote about my group's suggestion

that I could have acknowledged Donna's involvement in her issue, a new realization struck me, now seven years later. In my interaction with Donna, I had exhibited a blindness nicely parallel with the one I had pointed out to the class on Wertsch's part. Just as Wertsch was unable to see the child's organismic preoccupation with the puzzle wheel as cracker, I was blind to Donna's own independent agenda, whatever it was. Whatever it was, it was important to her. Her attempts to make an esoteric comparison between Vygotsky and Piaget I saw as showing off how much she knew. And maybe that was there, too. But my assistants also felt that she had a right to have me acknowledge her serious involvement in an issue. I would now say, further, that she had a right to have her concern given enough space to see just what it was. For example, I could have said something like, "There's a point that you are making that is important to you, but I am not getting it. Can someone help us out?" I turn now to my second case, rather different from the first.

**Case II. Students In the Post-Class "Laboratory"**
**Help Me Find A Better Strategy**

This case reflects an expanded collaboration. Now, both the teaching MAT students and the non-teaching other students participated in the post-class laboratory. In this case, I review the events of classes and laboratory reviews concerning my instruction in two successive class sessions, on a Tuesday and a Thursday. Again, a few weeks into the quarter the students had begun their student teaching, and again they came to class after their day of teaching.

The important substance is conveyed by two field notes. They describe how I failed in a Tuesday class to elicit from the MAT students an account of a teaching experience. Joint exploration by the students and me of specific experiences students have had in their practice teaching is an important feature of this course. In a laboratory session held immediately after the class, students explored why the class had been unresponsive to the request I had made. The first field note was written on the Wednesday morning following the early evening lab review of the afternoon Tuesday class. Our lab discussion clarified why my initial attempt to elicit teaching experiences from them had failed, and suggested several alternative strategies I could use to draw them out. The second field note, written after the Thursday class, gives my description of what happened in the Thursday class.

This case study illustrates the reflective structure that grew out of my first use of students

as reflective assistants. I came to call our meetings a "lab" because that term has currency in universities and allows me a category of required student activity that university folks can understand even though they mostly would find the lab's purpose foreign. Quite simply, the lab is a discussion after each regular session (with a ten-minute break) in which some students in the course and I talk about what happened in the previous class's instruction. I rotate all of the MAT students through the lab in a way that each student participates in four successive labs. The few students not in the MAT program that I allow into the course attend all of the lab sessions (since they are not currently teaching). While the course enrollment runs between 15 and 25, lab sessions usually have from six to eight students.

Each lab session began by each of us responding individually to a sheet of paper with open-ended stems. Each of us chose three or four stems to respond to according to which stems seemed to "resonate" best with our impressions of the immediately past class session. Stems from the most recent lab, identical with minor changes to those used earlier, were:

A slow part of today's class was when..;
I was particularly struck by..;
I wish we could have had less..;
I wish we could have had more.. ;
The energy of today's class was..
I was not very active because..;
I liked it when.. Because..;
I was uneasy when..

After four or five minutes of jotting down salient impressions, we simply go around the group noting, describing, and often discussing one item from each of us. We repeat as many rounds as necessary to cover all we have noted.

The field notes below describe a Tuesday and a Thursday class of the course, and the Tuesday and Thursday labs that followed on the heels of the two class sessions. The two field notes were written to sort out my own memories, thoughts, and feelings about what had transpired in the laboratory that followed each class session. They therefore contain references that may occasionally be opaque to the reader. They are important artifacts as written, however, so I have kept them mostly intact. I ask the reader to assume something of the attitude of an archeologist confronting and interpreting the stuff I am digging up from the past.

The nub of this second case study is improved instruction from Tuesday to Thursday

resulting directly from reflections by students in the Tuesday laboratory. The case illustrates the kind of discussions that take place in the laboratory sessions, gives examples of my occasional field notes, and shows concretely how an important pedagogical move I use often in these classes was illuminated and changed.

The two field notes are presented here mostly as I wrote them soon after each of the two lab sessions. I have made some improvements in grammar and have added some headings.

**Field Note 1 on Lab Discussion of Session # 13**

**2/15/95 - One Day After Session 13 and Its Lab**

In class session, after discussing Dweck's (1975) article on alleviating learned helplessness, I indicated that our earlier discussion of Chris H's (an MAT student's) teaching, discussed in an earlier class session, had been useful for just about everyone, most especially Chris. I then said it would be useful today in class if someone would describe their own teaching for our examination. Pause. Silence. A few comments touched on quandaries, e.g., C L's grading in which she was giving D's to something like 13 of 21 students in a class. After discussing a couple of quandaries that did not constitute descriptions of teaching, I said the class seemed resistant to discussing teaching episodes. J F said maybe it was because they had just written their papers and that their teaching episodes were so fresh in their minds. I said I thought that would be an advantage, not a blockage, and, it being the ending hour, I said we'd discuss the class's reluctance in the lab. Folks slowly dispersed with the usual buzz of conversation (Alice had that day been proposed to by her boyfriend, thus was not in class; Stephan came to expound enthusiastically on the usefulness of Dweck and Leggett's (1988) article, etc.).

In lab I immediately asked about the class reticence, and that topic occupied us fully and productively for a half hour, when I adjourned -- early, to go to supper with Carole Mitchener, [9] who had sat in on the class and lab.

This note is to nail down four suggestions that Carrie, Stephan, Chris, and Ruanda made in the lab. (1) Stephan, explaining today's reticence, indicated that maybe they were talked out: they talked shop every possible opportunity during the day, they were observed and then held conference with the observer, etc. Carrie followed up, noting that when they (MATers) [10] arrived back on campus, they all gathered in the lounge and talked before class about their day. This led me to suggest that instead of making the rather general, abstract request for someone to bring up "their teaching," that I simply ask them to tell the class what they had been discussing in the

lounge, each one giving an account of that specific spontaneous conversation, from which we could draw out one or more of the students on their experience. That seemed to the lab group to be a more promising opening than the open-ended request to describe "teaching." (2) Chris recalled that the time he had described his teaching problem, the class had begun with the MATers writing about their teaching (something good, something frustrating, something needed), and from that I had elicited brief descriptions from four of the class, the last of which had been Chris's, which became the class's focus. We didn't write today, he said, suggesting that those earlier writing stems had been a good primer for eliciting students' teaching experiences. (3) Chris then suggested that it was easy for them all to focus on particular kids in their classes, kids who stood out for a number of reasons, but whose actions could easily be productive to examine as teaching challenges. That would be a much easier, more concrete, more accessible focus, for example, than "teaching." Finally, (4) Ruanda said that none of our discussions had touched on curriculum much and she was interested in their (Carole later noted Ruanda's we-them framing) "units." Thereupon Stephan waxed eloquent about how the units had had to be reworked, redesigned to fit the student groups they were actually teaching. His detailed description of the process he had gone through, which struck a chord in others, suggested the fourth strategy for eliciting teaching descriptions: Ask something like: "What's happening to your teaching of your unit?" or "In what ways have you found it necessary to change your unit to accommodate your students," or "What has been the student's response to the best and worst parts of your unit?" (One difficulty with this approach might be getting bogged down in the details of a unit, but it is worth a try: the MATers have all invested hours and hours in developing their units.)

These four ideas seemed so relevant, so possible, so promising, and the lab discussion so centered on this one problem I was facing, that I felt the lab had completed what any lab might be expected to do, and I adjourned it, feeling high about its productivity.

Later in my discussion with Carole [a review, then, of a review; a mini-lab about our lab], it occurred to me that the lab had dealt, tacitly, with a question of cause and effect, an attribution problem. Our lab discussion had implicitly framed the question we were discussing ("Why the MAT students' reluctance in *this* class to describe their own teaching?"), as a question of my strategy in eliciting the desired kind of narrative. The cause of my difficulty was not lack of effort, and not my or their ability, but the how of getting the students to focus and narrate -- an issue of strategy.

The irony of this, and its beauty, struck me: The one-article assigned for this session that we did not get to in class discussion, [11] was Curtis and Graham's (1991) paper on beliefs about strategy, as a cause of failure or success. I had attributed the class's response to my attempts to elicit a narrative of teaching to their "resistance," focusing on a motivational quality in them. It had not occurred to me that I might draw directly from the Curtis and Graham text and attribute their lack of response to *my strategy* of eliciting a narrative from them.

So somehow in tomorrow's class I can now segue from the lab, which dealt with the question of my failure to elicit a narrative of teaching, to the three basic dimensions of causes identified by the attribution/belief literature: ability, effort, and *strategy*. We can then classify those along the lines that class discussion did identify, namely causes of failure under our control vs. beyond our control.

After I recall to the class, tomorrow, the episode of "resistance" and recount our lab's discussion, I can then implement one or some combination of the four new strategies suggested by Chris and the others in our lab review. In this way I can bring the idea of strategy as a cause of failure into full, explicit, illustrated view. We can discuss whatever narratives do emerge from the combined viewpoints of attribution and the two new readings for tomorrow. I end this field note here, but will add a follow-up after tomorrow's class and lab.

**Field Note 2 on Lab Discussion of Session # 14**

**2/17/95 - The Friday After Session 14 and Its Lab**

**Narrative 1. The Next Class (Thursday).** I began class yesterday with a segue from the previous lab discussion of my difficulty in getting the MAT folks to give a teaching narrative. In class, I described the lab discussion's results as moving away from my "diagnosis" of the class's silence in response to my request in the previous class for someone to "tell us about your teaching." I had perceived that response as the class's "resistance." In lab we had moved away from that, I said, discussing instead the way in which I had framed my request. I had asked generally for someone to tell us about their "teaching."

The lab discussion, I reported, turned attention to all the occasions when the MATers did, indeed, talk about their teaching in and outside of our class. One of the factors given for "reticence", indeed, was the enormous amount of time the students did talk shop with each other, with their supervising teachers, with university observers. The result was that they often had the feeling of ENOUGH ALREADY. But then, I said, attention had turned to how the MATers 1)

talked a lot about individual students in their classes, students that stood out positively or, more frequently, negatively; 2) had had to revise their teaching units that they had worked so hard to create, revisions forced by the realities of the students they were actually teaching; 3) gathered in the lounge to talk about their teaching day; and 4) had, indeed, held an extended, focused discussion of one episode in an earlier class, and that that had been "primed" by everybody writing for 10 minutes on recent teaching.

All of this suggested, I said, four strategies that I could use to elicit from them in-class narratives of their teaching experiences. Each of these strategies could make it easier for them to provide accounts of their own teaching. Each of them was more concretely framed, more focused, than the way I had tried to elicit a narrative in the previous class, which was the more general question, "What's happening in your teaching?" I remarked on the irony of that lab discussion in light of the fact that the one reading we had not gotten to in the last class was the one reading that emphasized strategy as a cause of success or failure.

I then listed the three principal attributions a teacher or child might make regarding the cause of failure or success -- ability, effort, and strategy -- and turned to one of the day's readings, Koestner, Zimmerman, and Koestner (1987) on praise (attribution), involvement, and intrinsic motivation.

(Side comment: I failed to attend to the other reading, from Nehring's Why Do We Gotta ..., which focuses on strategy. I also did little to contextualize the Koestner et al text as preface or grounding for discussing a teaching episode from a class member, which I fully intended to, and did, get to as the main business of the class session.)

After reviewing the details of the Koestner et al study, and after some discussion of its meaning, its contrasts to Dweck's study, the difficulty in interpreting some of it, etc., and after looking at a couple of its tables, I re-listed the three principal kinds of causes teachers and students used to explain success and failure, using a little solid 3-sided pyramid to illustrate how I added "other resources" to ability, effort, and strategy. I then said that we had not discussed strategy, but that the lab had, and had suggested the four strategies.

**Narrative 2. I Implement the New Strategy.** So now, I said, I'd like to implement one of those strategies, and asked them to think of some student that readily came to mind in their teaching. Could they do that? Nods all around. "Can someone tell us, then, about a student?," I asked.

JS volunteered, asking if it was all right to talk about a student, a girl she was having difficulty with. I said, sure!, and we were off. For the next 45 minutes, that is, the rest of the class, we drew out details about:

--the student's actions

--the patterns of the student's actions

--JS's verbal responses to specific comments in class by the student

--JS's interpretations of the student's motives

--JS's feelings at certain points in a given interchange with the student

--class members' interpretations of what was causing the student's pattern of behavior

**Narrative 3. Class Discussion of J.S.'s Narrative.** Our class discussion included student-to-student interchanges about the appropriateness of given modes of handling this student's pattern of behavior. Briefly, the pattern was for the student to make interpretations of fictional texts subjectively, in a way that denied any grounded, *textual* basis for interpreting character motives. The student would argue that any interpretation was "subjective," only a matter of personal opinion. The student would also call the story under discussion "stupid" and denied that authors had any purpose in writing. But it was also the case that the student would engage in arguments with other class members, siding with JS, and rejecting her peers' interpretations. No matter who she argued against, however, her comments were made with an air of superior certainty and disdain for others' interpretations or approaches.

Class members made a number of suggestions about how JS might respond to the student, including:

-- a private conversation with the student,

-- accepting and validating what the student had said and moving on,

-- gently cutting the student off and moving on to JS's own agenda,

-- attending to the student's effective participation,

-- interpreting the student's motives as similar to the motives that other MATers were seeing in some of their students.

The student's pattern, JS felt, cast a pall on the class, and made discussion difficult. That very day the student had been absent from JS's class and "discussion went beautifully." The girl's behavior made JS feel "angry," but so far JS had responded solely to the substantive semantic content of the student's comments, commenting on the logic of the girl's arguments in terms of

textual evidence.

One upshot of our class discussion of JS's student and handling was, I think, a new, focused clarity on what JS's difficulty was: It was the effect that the student was having on the class and its discussion -- and, of course, on JS's agenda. It also became clear, with explicit assessment from JS, that she was using up a lot of energy in working over her problem with this student. Yet JS rejected, almost out of hand, every suggestion made to her about how she might respond to the student -- with one exception. She did say to Carole Mitchener at one point, "that sounds exactly right." She was referring to an interpretation by Carole of what the girl was probably looking for. The issue seemed to boil down, Carole suggested, to whether the girl could trust JS not to cause her, the student, hurt or humiliation. The suggestion in essence, was that the student was testing whether she could "trust" JS to see her as someone to take her seriously, to pay attention to as intelligent.

(Later, in the lab and at supper with Carole, I said I thought that the girl's disdainful attacking tone of voice and mode were strangely opposite to a style designed to generate safety and trust, but the response of the lab students and Carole found logic in the idea that the best defense is a strong offense, that if one were in doubt about whether one's teacher would take one seriously, that it might be important to push and to test the teacher. Sounds plausible.)

Another detail comes back to me: I remembered that when I asked JS how she felt at the point where the girl had called the story under discussion "stupid," JS had said that she felt that the class was going to hell. I had indicated that I didn't mean to ask what she <u>thought</u>, but rather what she <u>felt</u>. She replied with another assessment of her thoughts, "felt that...". Eventually in the discussion she was able to report that she had felt angry.

I explained why I was asking, relating to her and the class the "lore" from clinical practice that patients, whose emotions were all confused and who had great difficulty talking about their emotions, often found ways to do things and say things that produced in others the very emotions the patients were feeling. Patients' emotions were often clarified in the therapist's mind, I said, by the idea that the emotions a patient brought about in others were often the very emotions the patient him- or herself was experiencing but unable to express verbally. When baffled, then, about what was going on in the patient, the therapist might gain some insight by tuning in to the emotions the therapist her- or himself was feeling, that doing so could be informative about the kinds of emotions the patient was currently feeling. By asking JS what this girl brought up in JS

emotionally, I was asking JS what she might be feeling that the girl, too, might possibly be feeling and responding to. As I remember, JS listened.

A number of comments -- in part from me and from Carole Mitchener, who entered our discussion at important points -- emphasized that JS did have a problem, that it would not go away, and that it might be good for her to use her practice teaching opportunity to take some focused action on her problem. She might, indeed, decide to "batten down the hatches and ride out the storm," but that it might be better to take the opportunity to handle this problem directly and explicitly. It was the kind of problem that could easily come up with her, and with other students, in regular teaching. JS was non-committal on this, offering at the end of the class only that she would give us an "up-date at the end" of her practice teaching. I responded: "Or maybe in a couple of weeks," and asked how many more weeks JS was to teach. She replied: "23 more days!"

Stephan, who had been silent throughout, said that he would like to say something. He indicated that he really felt for JS, that it was clear that she had a burden, and that he hoped she would not let it get her down. He said other touching words of encouragement, ending with "and I will pray for your peace of mind" or words very like those. His words provided a touching ending to the class.

**Narrative 4. Lab Discussion**. I was absent when the lab began, because an MATer who had been absent from the class was waiting outside and needed to see me on an urgent private matter. But when I came back Carole, Ruanda, Doug, and Terri were in animated discussion, having covered already a lot of ground. They were unanimous and rather amazed at the success of the strategy of my asking the MATers to focus on some one student that stood out in their teaching and its capacity to elicit a rich narrative and discussion.

Lab discussion had turned to how productive the class's discussion was. But we also noted our failure to connect JS's teacher-student interaction to our reading. I said I had thought about needing connections during the discussion, but had not been able to see one clearly enough to suggest it. It also struck me, I said, that among the perspectives from assigned readings none addressed directly how a student could undercut discussion, and trigger such an emotional reaction in the teacher give an appearance of commenting on the class's and teacher's interpretations of a text. The absence of readings dealing with teachers' emotional responses to classroom events turned our attention to some possible readings. [12]

The lab discussion went right to 7 PM, a full hour for the others and a good 45 minutes for me. We discussed various class members' reactions to JS's narrative, mentioned some connections among the four attributed sources of success and failure, [13] and further discussed JS's response and her student. Only a couple of details come back to me as I write, however.

We picked up on JS's out-of-hand rejection of all suggestions about how to respond to, or think about, her student. At no point did she say, for example, well that's an interesting point, or that's something to think about, or some such. When she listened to the comments, JS had a fairly impassive face, did not smile or nod, but simply attended to the person speaking.

**Post-Laboratory Thoughts As I Write This Field Note.** I NOW wonder if that same manner entered significantly into her student's response, contributing to the girl's stance of arguing-against, to break through JS's impassive manner. Carole picked up on JS's consistent rejection of ideas as perhaps JS's contribution to the very kind of interaction JS was finding so difficult. That was a possibility we did not think of during the class itself.

Another idea about JS and her student. JS said that her student was not well liked by others in the class, and that the name "preppy" seemed to be accepted by the others but that some other name, which JS said but which I had never heard before, was given to this student and her small clique. JS rather thought that her student resented being rejected or at least unacceptable to the others in her class. It occurs to me that JS's student causes JS to feel helpless and angry, and that her student could well feel precisely those emotions regarding her social situation among her peers, to say nothing about her relations with adults.

It also strikes me, now, that JS's impassive manner just possibly might be connected to her frequent comments about gender discrimination, which by now the MATers have identified as JS's "hobby horse." My connection is this: Given that JS frames her world a good portion of the time in terms of gender discrimination, and given that there is lots of objective evidence of gender inequality and discrimination, not to mention harassment, it follows that a good part of JS's experience is touched (saturated?) by indignation and anger. These emotions, in JS's situation as teacher and student, must be either heavily sublimated -- as in active protest, writing, demonstrating, confronting, etc -- or heavily repressed. Given the limited time open to MATers for extra-curricular things like writing or protests, I think JS must be shunting off, suppressing, a good deal of anger and indignation.

Is it too far fetched, then, to think that one important strategy for JS is to suppress

emotionality generally, to think that she feels that once she allows any free rein to any emotion, the indignation will also flow freely, and dangerously? I don't think it's out of the question. If JS is suppressing a good bit of anger and other emotionality, that would be entirely in keeping with an impassive facial expression, a control over overt expression -- or at least control over emotionality when teaching.

So now JS encounters a student who is angry and who is hitting back. And into this girls's English class comes a student-teacher for 8 weeks, JS, a teacher who the student has trouble "reading," because the new teacher's face is impassive. Could it be that the very presence of an adult who is controlling strong emotion, or even an adult who is controlling anger, is sensed by this adolescent as dangerous, as a threat to her security?

Well, that is a line of speculation prompted by yesterday's class and last night's laboratory. And yesterday's class was made possible by the previous laboratory's discussion of the previous class, providing me with clear, alternative strategies for eliciting narratives of teaching encounters. (My quandary now is to know how much, if any, of this line of thought to share with anyone besides Carole M. or, if at some point it seems useful to share some of it with JS herself, and how that might be productively accomplished.)

**Case III. I Move Discussion to "Main Points,**

**Thereby Missing an Important Reality**

A field note again conveys the bulk of this third case. The field notes, recall, were my way of reflecting on a laboratory discussion that, in turn, reflected on an immediately preceding class discussion. After this particular lab discussion I was excited and had many mixed emotions about what the lab had uncovered. I was excited about that, but also about the intense confirmation I felt about having the labs, about having created and sustained this new instrument of reflective practice.

By the time the events of this case arose, I had had several cycles of the laboratory, several cycles of rotating every MAT student through four successive post-class reviews. The process had become fairly routine. First, we all wrote responses to the open-ended stems. Then we went around the room, hearing and often discussing (occasionally at length) each student's description of what he or she had noted about the class in one of her or his stems. I expressed mine at the end of each round. We repeated rounds until all said we had covered and discussed what we all had noticed.

The field note has four sections. The first recovers my memories of the class discussion [14] itself, a class about halfway through the ten week course, again The Psychology of Teaching. The second section describes the laboratory's discussion of the class, followed by a section in which I wrote out my thoughts as I reflected "now" (at the time I wrote the field note, the morning after the evening lab), looking back on the lab discussion. In the fourth section, I ruminated on the whole process of thinking about teaching in this context of labs, field notes, and reflections on field notes.

**Field Note 3.** -- 2/28/96. Field note written after the laboratory that followed a session of week 9, focused on S. Stodolsky's (1988) chapter 4, "Beyond Subject Matter..")

**In class.** The class began with my board-talk linking the universal need humans have for cognitive/affective order to cause-effect connections and attributions, from attributions to fixed and changeable causes, with cases of each, linking finally to strategies and then to the day's readings on strategies, including Stodolsky's chapter.

Bill W. opened the discussion, wondering what Stodolksy's data base was, and particularly how restricted the sample was. Laura G. had the book on hand, and provided the information that 11 metropolitan districts, including Chicago schools, were included. I added that I thought another researcher who did the same sampling would come up with means rather like Stodolsky's, and we moved on to a concern that Jamie had indicated but not yet voiced.

Jamie said she was concerned about Stodolsky's comments on Preparatory Activities, that Stodolsky seemed to belittle repetition of directions that Jamie saw as very necessary. Discussion that followed verified that some of Stodolsky's language did, indeed, seem to devalue the observed "redundancy" of directions. It also brought out comments that much redundancy was also a) present, not to be denied and b) recognized as not terribly worthwhile by teachers themselves.

After some concentrated discussion, it seemed to me that the topic of preparatory comments by teachers had become a focus of discussion with its own momentum, and I felt time pressing for more extended discussion of what I considered the more important "meat" of the chapter, namely the ideas of level of cognitive thought, levels of engagement, and pacing. So, after a bit, I became convinced that I had to intervene to move the discussion to these other matters. I said that this section on preparatory directions was not the heart of this chapter, and

indicated that we should move on to other aspects of the chapter. Then Laura made another comment about having taken Stodolsky's course and that the students had examined the whole book critically and that Stodolsky had denied any intention of devaluing any preparatory activities.

With Laura's continuation of the focus on preparatory activities, I pressed harder for a shift to the rest of the chapter. I added what I hoped would be a transition comment out of this section to the wider scope of the chapter by saying something like: "Good people, even researchers, can make mistakes and still their work can have value," hoping that the "value" part would be taken as the part I hoped we now would discuss. That comment, along with my earlier discussion-shift comments, did indeed move us to the other concepts in the chapter, and then to a wide ranging discussion of MATers' strategies in conducting discussions, using groups, setting up and conducting lessons, and the like. Eventually we did spend good time and thought on implications of Stodolsky's chapter.

**In Lab.** Ten to 12 of us stayed for lab, and I asked those who had attended before whether they thought our small group structure or our stem-by-stem survey structure was more productive. Bill thought that when we had both small groups and whole-group follow-up it was redundant, and Milan preferred the whole-group survey, so we went around the room, question by question. After finishing the first two stems, we started around on interactions that had "struck" us. Several had noted my comments about moving the discussion beyond Stodolsky's section on preparatory activities, generally finding my comments or my influence appropriate, but noting some more than usual force and focus in my influence attempt. I commented that I had, indeed, felt focused and convinced that discussion should move on to the other aspects of Stodolsky's chapter.

When it came Jennifer O.'s turn, she had a different take on my interventions. They had made her angry, she said. She felt that my comments about good people making mistakes and still having something valuable to say seemed condescending and not responsive to Jamie's concerns. She had noticed Jamie's facial reaction and subsequent withdrawal from the discussion as registering a feeling of having been put down and certainly not heard, and that that had made her, Jen, angry. Sara M. had thought that Jamie might well have been trying to voice a concern Jamie felt about all the observations being made of her as a student teacher, with attendant worry whether they, like Stodolsky, might easily misinterpret very necessary pedagogical "redundancy" as unnecessary and a waste of time, thus misjudging in their insensitive observation. Sara said she

had felt that herself, with outside observers with whom she had no contact and no opportunity to talk with afterward, as she did have with her own supervisors.

With Jen's observations and comments and Sara's speculation, it seemed to me quite possible that I had, indeed, paid no attention to a sense that I had had in class, in response to Jamie's comments. I had felt that there was a good deal of emotional force and commitment behind Jamie's comments. But I ignored that sense of emotional intensity. Instead, I had tacitly labeled Jamie's comments about teachers' preparatory directions, I now think, as missing the forest for the trees, a rather too narrow reading of Stodolsky's chapter. I had felt support for that tacit construing from the responses of the other MAT students. So now, in lab, being brought up short by Jen's and Sara's comments, I could see how I had taken my own purposes in assigning Stodolsky's chapter -- purposes which focused on concepts entirely other than preparatory activities -- as the privileged matter to be focused on, and taken Jamie's concerns as peripheral and, indeed, threatening to become, in my mind, a blockage.

In that construing, I could easily legitimate "moving on." But I was paying no attention to something I also felt, namely the intensity of Jamie's concern, comments, and persistence. I could, with Jen's observations and her own anger -- which for me seemed grounded, intense, and focused -- see a whole new reality, one that I then articulated in lab as running over Jamie, of pushing her concerns aside for my own pre-planned agenda, namely the as yet undiscussed concepts in Stodolsky's chapter.

Jen made clear that she was not angry at covering those concepts, but only at the <u>way</u> I had moved on, particularly at the "condescending" comment and the effect on Jamie which, she pointed out, resulted in Jamie not participating the rest of the class session.

**<u>Reflections now</u>** [at the time of writing this field note]. I am convinced now that I misconstrued Jamie's focus as narrow, as unnecessary defense of teachers. It was a sidetracking, I thought, and it was getting away from my preferred focus. On reflection, I do not have to make a <u>choice</u> between attending to Jamie's concerns and to mine. I had enough internally registered evidence, namely my feeling of her intensity, to tell me there was more there than met the eye. Would I but attend to it. Construing it as an either-or threat to my preferred focus, I construed the situation, in effect, as a win-lose conflict. If her focus or concerns continued to be discussed, mine would be shoved aside. But in my mind, by the time I had become impatient with the discussion about preparatory activities, I no longer thought of the discussion as <u>Jamie's</u> concern.

but as a topic that had somehow taken hold of the class's attention. I saw no resource in the group itself that could be mobilized to enlarge the scope of discussion, no resource, that is, except my own urging to move on.

Two comments on that: First, both these agendas or topics could have been accommodated. Second, Jamie's own concerns might have had *more real connections and valuable curricular content* than my selections from Stodolsky. Attending to the intensity I felt, I could have also shifted discussion away from "preparatory activities" to what they meant for Jamie: "I can see this matter is important to you. What import does this section you have read have for you?" or simply "Tell me more about what this all means for you, Jamie." That could have moved us to the deeper level of emotional intensity or commitment that I had felt coming from her, and away from the mere necessity or redundancy of preparatory activities. Or, if Jamie did not feel all that intense, that, too, would have become apparent.

But if Sara M. had been even halfway correct, that there was some important emotion about outside observers misconstruing what was necessary in teaching and the whole matter of evaluation, judgment and so on, then that could have released much shared emotion and energy around that issue, shared by the other MAT students. And, once discussed, we could then move, with cleared decks so to speak, to my agenda or, indeed, to others connected to judging what is necessary and unnecessary in teaching -- even to students' own over-severe or naive judgments upon themselves about what is necessary or unnecessary.

It strikes me now, that the whole issue of being observed is connected to evaluation and that that, in turn, is connected to the issue (Deci and Ryan, 1985) of controlling versus informative feedback. My moving on, away from Jamie's focus that had now become the class's, was clearly controlling, and came out of my construal of win-lose conflict. An informational approach might have been simply to inform the group: "I really do think it is important to move to these other concepts in this chapter, but is there something we need to get to that we haven't yet touched on in this discussion?" And then it would also be information-seeking to ask: "Jamie, what was your concern, exactly, about this section in Stodolsky?" Or even "If you had to name some emotions that come up in you as you read this section, what would they be?" and "Do they connect up with something in your teaching experience?"

There are quite a few rich avenues I could have pursued if I had attended to the intensity of Jamie's comments and suspended my own agenda for the moment -- a moment to simply test

what might lie behind the intensity, and having tested, then being in a position to go with the newly emerging agenda for a bit, or not, or to turn back to my previous agenda of Stodolsky's concepts and findings regarding complexity, pacing, and engagement.

Of course there are risks in being open to one's feelings about this or that student's intensity. The fear of most teachers committed to a curriculum -- and if they are not committed to their curriculum to some degree, why are they teaching it? -- is that something unknown, unplanned, and of lesser value will replace something known, planned, and of greater value. And part of this is finding a way to "move on" that still honors the person and concerns of the one who raises a particular issue while also honoring the necessity of enlarging, expanding the issues and content to be focused on.

**Conclusions**

I conclude with four comments. The first two, one on beliefs the other on deeper understanding from writing, refer to my personal learnings about my teaching from the reflective process I have illustrated. The second two comments refer to different levels of reflection in the process I have written about here, and end with a summary of the important and distinctive components of the reflective process I have developed. These latter comments are more universalistic, generalizations that I think other reflective practitioners can take from my experiences.

**Reflecting on my beliefs.** When I read the transcript of my in-class remarks about culture being privileged over organism, I had doubts. Do I really believe this priority of subject matter -- of culture's accumulated thought-wealth -- over the learner's own motivation and interests? Or do I see both as always equal in importance? I think, upon further reflection, that both inevitably compete and must be attended to sensitively. My task, I think, is to be on my toes, to be as responsive as I can to which of these basic values, at any moment, I should give primary attention to in order to promote students' growth. Easy to say, not easy to do.

For example, what exercise (in the sense of training) should I engage in to make me better at recognizing at moments like Donna's challenge or Jamie's persistent emphasis on a "minor point" that I must dance that special step, that dance of slowing down, of resisting the impulse to privilege my own agenda of text or content, and to dance slowly that step which will allow both contradictory demands, of learner impulse and cultural acquisition, to be folded into the on-going interchange?

This re-thinking of basic value and its implied self re-training is, I think, a basic value of self study of the kind I am describing. It is a self-study of daily teaching and it is study disciplined by collecting objective data (tape recording), employing assisted reflection, reviewing accessible forms of data (transcripts of tape recording) as part of writing a narrative of self-study, and reflection upon the written narrative prior to presentation to a wider professional audience. But all of this examination of practice comes down to comparing what is observable in current actual practice with what one values. So part of the enterprise is getting greater clarity about what one values.

**Re-reading my case narratives.** Forced to ask myself what conclusions I can draw from the cases has led me to understand my teaching in these episodes at deeper levels. When I re-read my field note about JS's responses to her student it hit me that what I had written about them applied strikingly to me and Donna. When Carole Mitchener suggested that JS's student might have been testing whether she could trust JS "not to cause her, the student, hurt or humiliation," much the same applied to Donna's interchanges with me. I, too, was using up a lot of energy thinking about Donna. Donna's objections to my interpretations could also be seen as testing me, to repair her sense of embarrassment felt earlier in the class, and to test whether I could take her views seriously. Finally, my initial feelings of frustration and anger in response to Donna, like JS's in response to her student, probably reflected the feelings Donna herself was experiencing. My advice to JS, that she might tune into her own feelings and understand better what was behind her student's responses applied to me equally. Physician, heal thyself.

That self admonition is hardly enough to accomplish a change in my on-line, in-class sensitivities, however. I have to figure out exercises and experiments to carry out in class to structure my attention to my own feelings-as-information-about-student in response to what look like irrelevant or obstructionistic participations on a student's part. I must include such exercises with my preparations for teaching specific classes, to train myself in the arts of slowing down my initial, defensive responses. I need to find ways, that is, to train myself to dance that special dance that folds into my purposes and projected teaching the impulses and agendas of the student who seems at first to be diverting from a productive focus, so we can move together rather than in opposition. A sig[illegible] that greets me in the parking lot of my favorite cabinet maker reads: "Make your world larger by going slower." [15]

**Reflecting on these reflections.** I can identify in these cases, and now in my presentation

of them, five levels of thinking about classroom events and dynamics. The first level is "on the hoof," while the classroom action is unfolding. As I teach I must decide what is going on to know what my next action should be. That level of construing, mostly tacit, falls back on plans, commitments, and sensitivities, but must be fluid, fast, and reactive. That's where I must learn to dance better.

The second level is reflective. That is the level I have reached in the labs. And note that reflection there is not merely cognitive: It is above all social. It is collective reflection, carried on with those persons most expert about the impact my teaching has on students, namely the students themselves. At this level I get surprising new perspectives, perspectives impossible if I reflect only alone. At this level I also experience interpersonal tension and other emotions.

A third level of thinking is the level of field note writing: reflecting on the reflection. It is an exercise both in deeper reflection and in meta-reflection. Deeper reflection revisits the reflective commentary of the lab, searches for authentic meaning without any audience to listen to or defend yourself in. In the writing and reflecting comes a new level of one's own intelligence and sensitivity. And meta-reflection is then also possible. I can, as I am now doing, reflect on the process of reflection itself. Example: I am glad that we again followed the practice of: a) having each lab participant respond to his or her own selection from among the 8 stems, writing the responses alone; and b) hearing "read-outs" of each stem, stem by stem, around the room. This structured, social process is effective.

A fourth level of construing is available if I take a next step. I can reflect on my field notes with the whole class. To bring a field note about lab discussion back into the course itself? Why not? I open myself up to a critique of my field note, but that, too should be grist for my mill. And will we reflect on how the class reflected on this reflective field note? Maybe. The levels and cycles of reflection are infinite.

Finally, is a fifth level of thought stimulated by writing case studies for professional presentation. Presenting the cases make me go over my narrative accounts, reliving both the class and lab discussion of them, as well as re-thinking what I have written in any field notes. I am forced also to draw more general conclusions, about my own learnings from reflecting and about the process of reflection itself. This fifth level has produced new tasks for me, and a new metaphor -- a more sensitive dance, a dance that slows down my press toward planned accomplishment and that transforms students who seem to be impeding my teaching goals into

dance partners. What I have to work on to improve is clearer now -- clarified by these different levels of reflection and, especially, by reflecting with my students.

**Disciplined reflection on practice.** To sum up, I have tried to describe a process of reflection that is somewhat more disciplined and demanding than most of the self studies I have read or heard presented. Its value, I think, is correspondingly greater than most studies, in that it demands not only that I recruit assistance but that the help I obtain is the help that only students in my class can provide. They are the recipients or victims of my teaching. They know better than anyone what is useful and not useful in my teaching. I hope my cases have made plain that what they know and can reveal to me about my teaching is in a realm entirely separate from my knowing or, indeed, any teacher's capacity for knowing alone, without joint reflection with students.

A second crucial part of my practice of reflection is that I reflect not on my teaching in general, or on some focal dimension I select. Rather, I structure my reflection on my teaching as I proceed through the sessions of a course, session by session. That brings not one summative reflection but some fifteen successive reflective interactions with students, often followed by written reflections in the form of field notes.

As to the choice of what part of my teaching practice should be the focus of my study, I have chosen, generally, to study my classroom teaching as it proceeds, session by session. But beyond that, aspect that come in for comment are mostly up to the students. The written stems we all can respond to are open ended and vague. In general, the aspects that get our attention are aspects that somehow stood out for the students or for me, or both.

If I add to these parts of the process the reporting to other professionals cases that reveal the contents and processes of my assisted reflections, I add an even more intense review of my teaching that leads to a deeper level of understanding. The writing entailed in the cases increases concentrated thought about aspects not focused on before, brings to mind connections missed earlier, and suggests more clearly areas of my teaching that I can focus on for improvement. The result of the whole process is more understanding, but yes, more work. But work toward improved teaching is in the end rewarded by students' engaged responses to teaching that is better -- engaged responses that are at the core of why most of us teach in the first place.

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## Endnotes

1. Officially listed as "Educational Psychology," but cast rather differently from those based on current textbooks by that title. Students read only primary sources, selected for their psychological perspectives pertinent to experiences and dilemmas of student teachers as they undertake their practice teaching.

2. David and I would repair to my office and talk about what happened or failed to happen, what I had planned or expected, whether I had noticed how x student reacted when I answered a question, why I had done thus and so, and so on. It became clear after the first couple of sessions that I had never reflected on my teaching the way David and I were doing. My previous reflection took place within my own expectations and interpretations and necessarily from my own standpoint. And my previous reflection took place when I felt a need for it, not on a scheduled basis. It did not matter that David was a novice, that he did not intend to become a teacher, or that he was not himself teaching. He was simply a bright, inquisitive undergraduate who noticed things and asked questions from his own perspective as a student.

One of the most telling influences of David's questions and comments was to bring into focus the idea that the course might have, or ought to have, a single, fundamental and unifying theme or argument that everything in it added up to. If not a single theme or argument, then a very few fundamental ideas, ideas that would be at the core and as such would give meaning to every other idea and activity in the course. But to raise this possibility is to set off an inquiry not only into what is fundamental, but also into how each part of the course, especially each routine in the course, fits with the fundamental core idea(s).

3. The QACP (see Appendix A) asks for two central Quotes, a summary of the chosen article's explicit or implicit Argument, two Connections (of the chosen text with another text, and of the chosen text with a personal experience), and a Problem or Issue in teaching suggested by the reading. I comment on them and hand them back in a week.

4. I intended at some point to review the tapes as a source both for writing about my teaching and for reflecting on my teaching practices

5. Vygotsky's (1978) "Internalization of Higher Psychological Functions," and "Interaction Between Learning and Development."

6. Description of this session is based on listening to the cassette recording of the class session itself. The recordings of the post-session reviews in which the session's events were discussed were used by Amy and Bob in a paper they wrote and in that transfer of the tapes back and forth, I must have carefully put them in a special place for later listening and now no longer can find them. I draw partly on the paper they jointly wrote for the course, in which this episode of conflict and our review of it is briefly described.

7. Bob and Amy wrote a paper on our sessions reviewing the classes and described briefly our discussion of this episode, but their description was general (giving no details that one might gain from listening to the cassette recording of our review session).

> First, we discussed our impressions (emotions) about what had happened. It seemed to us that her [Donna's] attitude had been one of 'telling her opinions' rather than of wanting to inquire and learn... Then we listened to the cassette recording of the conflict and outlined the sequence of events. She had disagreed with his [my] interpretation of Vygotsky and voiced that in a slightly antagonistic manner. They had a short conversation back and forth which didn't go anywhere. He had said, 'We're not going to have a debate,' and 'If you want to do that, show evidence,' and then he had steered the conversation back to the whole group and moved on.

8. From Amy and Bob's paper, "Reflective Practitioning and Development of the Immediate Niche: A Case Study, Unpublished course paper, E. 303, March 5, 1993, p. 9.

9. Carole Mitchener, a faculty member at DePaul University in Chicago, Jerry Allender, at Temple, and I had agreed to make collegial exchanges of various sorts part of each of our self-study efforts. One of our efforts entailed Jerry and I sitting in on some of Carole's classes, and Carole and Jerry sitting in on some of my classes. Carole was a participant observer in this class and in the one following.

10. The class was made up principally of students in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program, preparing them for teaching English (or Mathematics) in secondary schools. A few "non-MATers" (undergraduate or graduate) were

given permission to attend if 1) they had had recent teaching experience of some kind and 2) they agreed to participate not only in all requirements of the course but also attend every session of the post-session laboratories. The MAT students were only required to rotate through four of the lab sessions.

11. We had discussed the Dweck (1975) and Dweck & Leggett (1985) articles.

12. Realizing this gap in my readings, and then later finding no research on teachers' experiences of emotion during their teaching day, I began research that produced rich texts of teachers' emotional experiences, positive and negative. Preliminary reports were presented at Herstmonceux conferences (Lighthall & Lighthall, 1996, 1998). I have subsequently used texts from these accounts of emotionality in the course, correcting the deficit I became aware of in the course of these lab discussions.

13. The four being effort, ability, strategy, and available supporting resources.

14. Such memories, retrieved by me alone, are of course always selective. I reflect only on what I am able, or choose, to remember. I assume my selection of memories always serves to protect my feelings (but not necessarily my best long-term interests), my current comfort. My tape recordings and the labs themselves are two mechanisms for mitigating this selection, for widening my purview to include realities important but more upsetting. Yet listening to tapes is tedious and time consuming, and takes a high level of commitment and strong priorities of reflection. Opportunity to present to others at professional meetings the whole process of assisted reflection on my teaching presses me into the tedium of reviewing kinds and volumes of data I might well not otherwise find time for.

15. Noticed and suggested by Maureen S. Lighthall, who noticed and suggested many other important things as she read this manuscript, for which I express love and gratitude.